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Dear FDA

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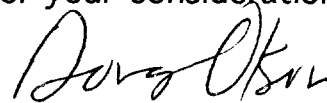
I would like to take this opportunity to strongly urge you to adopt more stringent labeling requirements for irradiated food. In my opinion, any food that contains any irradiated ingredient should be clearly labeled as such. The decision to eat or not eat irradiated food should be made exclusively by the fully informed consumer. If irradiated food is "completely safe" it should be the task of food processors to win consumers over through education, not through obfuscation.

The credibility of the FDA has already been damaged by the ongoing BGH controversy. Irradiation is now upon us, and numerous "advances" lie in wait, such as genetically altered foods. Many of these technologies are designed to make large scale agribusinesses more profitable.

Unfortunately, they often do so by attempting to sanitize fundamentally unclean production processes - unclean both in their effects on our food and in their damage to the environment (giant hog farms come to mind).

Like the widespread use (overuse, in my opinion) of antibiotics, irradiation falls into this category. The FDA should be working to discourage such practices. By doing so it will promote the public well being and regain the trust of a crucial minority of influential and well informed consumers. In addition, there are many profitable means of food production which are superior nutritionally, environmentally, and economically (organic agriculture comes to mind). Such means should be encouraged.

I apologize if I seem to have gotten off topic, but the issue of irradiation cannot be dealt with in isolation. It is part of the larger issue of how to provide food for a large population, how to do so in a way that is safe both at the table and in the environment and, ultimately, to what extent concentrated economic powers should be allowed to exert their influence in a democratic society. By resisting such powers when they run counter to the public interest, the FDA could be a powerful force for the good. I encourage you to be just that. Thank you for your consideration.


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